

**ABSTRACT**

Method for detecting and identifying unknown bioagents, including bacteria, viruses and the like, by a combination of nucleic acid amplification and molecular weight determination using primers which hybridize to conserved sequence regions of nucleic acids  
5 derived from a bioagent and which bracket variable sequence regions that uniquely identify the bioagent. The result is a "base composition signature" (BCS) which is then matched against a database of base composition signatures, by which the bioagent is identified.